

Kathmandu – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) today announced the award ceremony for an HIV/AIDS Short Film Competition titled *You Are No Exception* will be held on Saturday, 13 December 2008. Hosted by the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, Her Excellency Nancy J. Powell, the three best film makers will be announced on live television sponsored by the Nepal Investment Bank Limited. The event will air on Avenues and Sagarmatha television channels from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Selected through open competition, nine young promising Nepali filmmakers showcased their talents in these 8 minute-long short films while stimulating a greater understanding of individual risk of exposure to HIV. Three of these films are in the Maithili, Dhoteli, and Achhami languages highlighting specific stories relevant to these language groups.

The film competition is a key component of a broader communication campaign that aims to address social taboos and myths associated with the purchase and use of condoms; to increase people's understanding of the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS; and to promote the use of condoms.

A series of activities around these short films will take place including screening of the films in over 150 cinema halls covering 70% of the country and Cinema on Wheels, a special traveling film exhibition in 22 districts along the east-west highway and the Kathmandu Valley.

Over 10 stars from the entertainment industry of Nepal played roles in these films - veterans as well as new comers such as Nir Shah, Melina Manadhar, Dipak Raj Giri, Tripti Nadkar, Gauri Malla, Sanchita Malla, Saugat Malla, Namrata Shrestha, Sunid Pokharel, Arunima Lamsal. They accompanied the film crews on promotional tours to approximately 50 districts during which they interacted with college students, security forces, media, and local people wherever possible. Additionally, screening and interactions were organized in 21 armed force bases (Police, Armed Police Force and Army).

About USAID's Nepal Social Marketing and Franchising Project (N-MARC):

Launched in July 2006, the goal of N-MARC, USAID's private sector program in Nepal under the leadership of the Academy for Educational Development, is to undertake prevention campaigns that challenge stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS as well as to empower people to protect themselves from this deadly infection. N-MARC strives to achieve this by increasing the availability and sustained use of family planning, maternal and child health, and HIV/Sexually Transmitted Infection prevention products and services in Nepal.